*278 222 iron, or in the "Arab" style, or the product of Falasha smiths, that it be double-edged, or have a handle of horn or some exotic wood. Similarly, recipes requiring roots may state that they be dug with a spade of specified characteristics, or with a digging stick of special wood. As for the gatherer, in some recipes, he is a virgin boy, in others naked or facing east. Circumstantially, recipes established the day of the week on which the herbal may be obtained, and numerological details, such as the number of locations from which a particular herbal is to be gathered, and the number of samples to be taken from each place. Finally, the gatherer may be required to recite, and perhaps repeat, a designated common prayer before cutting or digging the botanical.

[801] [788]

*278 824 Once gathered, medicaments must be processed using the equipment and following the procedures specified by the recipe as being necessary for releasing the healing powers from their botanical confinement and for guarding them from dilution or loss. Botanicals may be required fresh or dried, crushed or ground or whole, soaked or decocted or simply mixed with other medicaments, strained through cloth or not further refined. Occasionally, recipes direct that medicaments be cooked with mead or distilled spirits, but it is the liquid (or tincture) which is discarded. In other recipes, botanicals, particularly leaves, require no processing other than being chewed or

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*278 824 rubbed across the palm (releasing the juices to be licked up). Other herbals must be burned or boiled before becoming therapeutically active, in smoke or vapor.

*278 • 801 804 Both absolute and relative measurements are used. Among the former are mentioned handfuls, finger-joint lengths, and weights equivalent to a small egg. Relative measurements are most common during decocting. Required ratios suggest a numerological component here, reduction from seven volumes to one being the most frequently used ratio. Numerological elements appear elsewhere during processing, as when a recipe required, as a final step in processing, that the preparation be rolled into seven portions, or that the materia medica be steeped for seven days.

*278 415 Equipment used for processing medicaments is of common domestic origin, sometimes specified unused (e.g., pots for decocting, cloth for straining), sometimes worn (e.g., pitted mortars for grinding). Generally, the containers used cannot be allowed to rest directly upon the ground, but must sit upon stones, whose number and provenience (usually riverine) are likewise specified by the recipe.

*278 In addition to preparations consumed orally, herbalists provide fumitories, inhalents, instillations, gargles, lotions, poultices, and therapeutic amulets.

*278 *767 Herbal therapies further indicate the appropriate

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759 cological specifics are kept secret, herbalists are not always adverse to commenting in public on the type of specialized equipment or esoteric knowledge that they possess (that, for example, he obtains medicinal roots with a digging stick of a "certain" exotic wood). By these means, the categories of pharmacological elaboration enter into common knowledge, while the specifics are retained by their owners.

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801 There is a third and final category of associations, numerological ones. Certain numbers (particularly three and seven) appear in therapies with greater frequency than do others. But this again represents only a statistical abstraction, largely unappreciated by the herbalist because of his familiarity with a very limited number of therapies. Here as in the other categories of pharmacological associations, the symbolism expressed by specific links is obscure and, so, unavailable to the herbalist for generating new associations. Thus, the combination of riverine stones, the number three, pitted mortars, and specific medicaments within a single therapy can only be "conventionally" explained by the herbalist.

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754 The herbalist who would "elaborate" his therapy is confronted by more than technical obstacles, however. A secular healer who betrays a speculative interest in the regularities of Amhara pharmacology can only excite his fellows to compare him with the debtera, and inevitably

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been mixed together with other ingredients (such as sacramental oil, juice or sap, animal blood or urine). The recipe further states which segments of the text (e.g., asmat) are to be represented in a contrasting [824] color (usually red). Finally, the botanical variety of reed with which the text is written may be determined also.

Beyond the effects gained from the manufacture of the digam itself, the text's goals are further augmented by materials which are included in the kitab, together [237] with the digam. These include, as indicated by the debtera's recipe, botanicals, often together with such exotic ingredients as a designated number of hairs from a lion's mane. The outer cover of the kitab is made of leather, but a debtera must determine if it should come from a wild or domestic animal, and, if the latter, what its sex and color should be. The digam is sewn into this, but whether the stitch should be to the right or to the left, whether the thread should be cotton or silk, and what its color should be, must also be con- [801] sidered first. The number of stitches to be made is likewise relevant, for numerological considerations suffuse the entire process of making the kitab. Nor are the makers of the kitab neglected; whether the debtera should be sexually continent before writing the digam, whether the cord by which the kitab is worn should be